

Less Stuff, More Happiness by Graham Hill

TED Talks

Graham Hill: Less Stuff, More Happiness

Filmed Mar 2011 • **Posted** Oct 2011 • TED2011

http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/graham_hill_less_stuff_more_happiness.html

Transcript (words from AWL are highlighted)

What's in the box? Whatever it is must be pretty important, because I've traveled with it, moved it, from apartment to apartment to apartment.

Sound familiar? Did you know that we Americans have about three times the amount of space we did 50 years ago? Three times. So you'd think, with all this extra space, we'd have plenty of room for all our stuff. Nope. There's a new industry in town, a 22 billion-dollar, 2.2 billion sq. ft. industry: that of personal storage. So we've got triple the space, but we've become such good shoppers that we need even more space. So where does this lead? Lots of **credit** card debt, huge **environmental** footprints, and perhaps not coincidentally, our happiness levels flat-lined over the same 50 years.

Well I'm here to suggest there's a better way, that less might actually equal more. I bet most of us have experienced at some point the joys of less: college -- in your dorm, traveling -- in a hotel room, camping -- rig up basically nothing, maybe a boat. Whatever it was for you, I bet that, among other things, this gave you a little more freedom, a little more time. So I'm going to suggest that less stuff and less space are going to equal a smaller footprint. It's actually a great way to save you some money. And it's going to give you a little more ease in your life.

So I started a **project** called Life **Edited** at lifeedited.org to further this conversation and to find some great solutions in this **area**. First up: crowd-sourcing my 420 sq. ft. apartment in Manhattan with **partners** Mutopo and Jovoto.com. I wanted it all -- home office, sit down dinner for 10, room for guests, and all my kite surfing gear. With over 300 entries from around the world, I got it, my own little jewel box. By buying a space that was 420 sq. ft. instead of 600, immediately I'm saving 200 grand. Smaller space is going to make for smaller **utilities** -- save some more money there, but also a smaller footprint. And because it's really **designed** around an **edited** set of possessions -- my favorite stuff -- and really **designed** for me, I'm really excited to be there.

So how can you live little? Three main **approaches**. First of all, you have to **edit** ruthlessly. We've got to clear the arteries of our lives. And that shirt that I hadn't worn in years? It's time for me to let it go. We've got to cut the extraneous out of our lives, and we've got to learn to stem the inflow. We need to think before we buy. Ask ourselves, "Is that really going to make me happier? Truly?" By all means, we should buy and own some great stuff. But we want stuff that we're going to love for years, not just stuff.

Secondly, our new mantra: small is sexy. We want space efficiency. We want things that are **designed** for how they're used the vast **majority** of the time, not that rare event. Why have a six burner stove when you

rarely use three? So we want things that nest, we want things that stack, and we want it digitized. You can take paperwork, books, movies, and you can make it disappear -- it's magic.

Finally, we want multifunctional spaces and housewares -- a sink combined with a toilet, a dining table becomes a bed -- same space, a little side table stretches out to seat 10. In the winning Life **Edited scheme** in a render here, we combine a moving wall with transformer furniture to get a lot out of the space. Look at the coffee table -- it grows in height and width to seat 10. My office folds away, easily hidden. My bed just pops out of the wall with two fingers. Guests? Move the moving wall, have some fold-down guest beds. And of course, my own movie theater.

So I'm not saying that we all need to live in 420 sq. ft. But consider the **benefits** of an **edited** life. Go from 3,000 to 2,000, from 1,500 to 1,000. Most of us, maybe all of us, are here pretty happily for a bunch of days with a **couple** of bags, maybe a small space, a hotel room. So when you go home and you walk through your front door, take a second and ask yourselves, "Could I do with a little life **editing**? Would that give me a little more freedom? Maybe a little more time?"

What's in the box? It doesn't really matter. I know I don't need it. What's in yours? Maybe, just maybe, less might equal more. So let's make room for the good stuff.

Thank you.